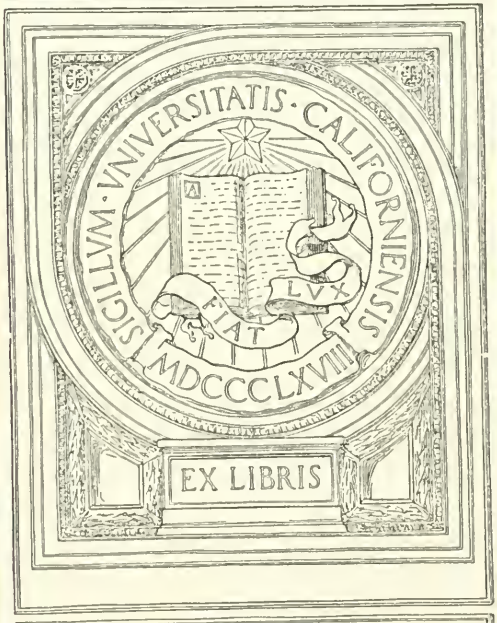
D515
A67v

The Villain of the World Tragedy

By
William Archer

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



GIFT OF
Inter. relations club

THE VILLAIN OF THE WORLD-TRAGEDY

A LETTER TO

PROFESSOR ULRICH V. WILAMOWITZ MÖLLENDORF

BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
1, ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON

PRICE TWOPENCE

THE VILLAIN OF THE WORLD-TRAGEDY

A LETTER TO

PROFESSOR ULRICH V. WILAMOWITZ MÖLLENDORF

BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
1, ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

THE VILLAIN OF THE WORLD-TRAGEDY

Sir,

If, by some fortunate chance, these pages should ever come into your hands, I beg you to believe that they are dictated, not by enmity, but by personal respect. In ancient days, when two armies faced each other in line of battle, it was the practice for champions on both sides to step out of the ranks and engage in a preliminary contest of boasts, taunts, and insults. There are many reasons why, in modern warfare, this practice has fallen into disuse. But the war of words from which the soldiers refrain is now carried on with redoubled virulence by professors and publicists, in speeches, interviews, pamphlets and magazine articles. During the present contest, both sides have engaged with ardour in this more or less conventional and obligatory slanging-match, if you will excuse the colloquialism; but I think the vituperative victory rests easily with Germany. It is because I find in your war-addresses a minimum of vituperation and a maximum of sense, that I think it worth while to try whether it may not be possible to clear away some of the tragic misconceptions which seem to me to underlie the frame of mind of those intelligent and highly-accomplished Germans of whom you are so distinguished a representative.

Of your achievements as a scholar I can, unfortunately, form no personal estimate. But I have been

accustomed, for more than twenty years past, to hear your name mentioned with something very like reverence by a man (a dear friend of mine) as well qualified as anyone in England, and perhaps in Europe, to appreciate your life-work. It was accordingly with eager anticipation that I began to read your war-addresses. Nor was I altogether disappointed. They are immeasurably better than anything else of their kind that I have come across—and I have read (or skimmed) something like 150 German war pamphlets, many of them by the most eminent among your colleagues. It is precisely the difference between you and them that tempts me to address you. I am sanguine enough to think that a man of your intellectual distinction cannot be so wholly given over to the fanaticism of the moment as to be incapable of either just thinking or generous feeling.

I quite recognize that it is an uphill battle I have to fight. It is not your reason but your will that is the adversary. If once you begin to suspect that the Allies are not an unparalleled combination of ruffians and fools, and especially that England is not the villain of the world-tragedy, the Judas of Germany's "passion," you cannot but feel an unpleasant weakening in your comfortable conviction that God, who is "truth and righteousness," must therefore give victory to the German arms. You are naturally reluctant to let the idea that Germany may not be entirely and ineffably in the right insinuate itself into your mind. But a trained intelligence like yours cannot be wholly at the mercy of the will to believe or to disbelieve. I am sure you have sufficient insight into the sources of human error to be somewhat on your guard against your passionate desire to hold Germany spotless and her enemies infamous. Perhaps, too, if you once

admit the least little doubt of the all-wisdom and all-goodness of your Fatherland, you may find some comfort in a corresponding mitigation of your contempt for the rest of the world. Such an accomplished master of "literae humaniores" cannot possibly take an absolute pleasure in the barren emotion of hatred—even for England.

II

May I lead up to my main argument by calling your attention to one or two minor points in which I think you are quite definitely and demonstrably mistaken?

You say that the actions of Germany and those of other nations are judged by different standards. This is true—one has often noted it with amazement in reading German war literature. It is, for instance, hard to see why, when English merchants make money, they should be denounced as a pack of hucksters, while German merchants who make, as they boast, a great deal more money, are held to have thereby given proof of lofty German idealism. But for German inequalities of judgement you have, of course, no censure. It is alleged inequalities on the other side that excite your indignation. Here is an instance you give:

> When [in 1870-71] we bombarded the fortified city of Paris it was an outrage upon a sacred spot. But when the English destroyed by bombardment ("zu Boden schossen") the defenceless Alexandria, that was, of course, entirely in order.

Now it is a plain matter of historical fact that Alexandria was not "defenceless," but was defended by an elaborate system of forts, mounting many hundreds of guns; it was precisely these forts, and not the city,

that the British fleet bombarded, in the face of no despicable resistance; and the damage done to the city was not caused by British shells, but by incendiarism—the work, it is believed, of convicts, either escaped from jail or purposely released in order to work on the fortifications. Ought you not to have made a little enquiry before talking of "das wehrlose Alexandrien"? And will you tell me that the army, the prayerful army,[1] of which you formed part, bombarded, or intended to bombard, only the forts of Paris? If so, they made rather bad practice.

Again, you say:

> When our Zeppelins drop bombs on the fortress of Antwerp, they [the enemy] protest; but how have they not boasted—how do not French prisoners even now boast—of having burnt by means of bombs the open city of Nürnberg! The will was there; only the power was lacking.

If you mean that the Allied press boasted that Nürnberg had been burnt, you have simply been deceived. This is one of the many instances of "die deutsche Wahrheit" to which I could call your attention. It is possible that some rumour to that effect was abroad among French prisoners: but if so, may I tell you why? It was doubtless because, on August 3, 1914, the German Government, in order to make out that France was the aggressor, spread abroad a report that French aviators had dropped bombs near Nürnberg, and actually instructed the German Ambassador in Paris to allege it as a reason for the declaration of war. The report has been investigated on the spot by German enquirers, and found to be devoid of foundation. You yourself imply that no bombs were dropped. But it is

[1] I allude, of course, to the prayer which you tell us that you and your comrades offered up on first viewing Paris in 1870.

conceivable that some French soldiers may incautiously have believed the German Government, and thought that some such exploit had actually been attempted. On the whole, however, the remarks attributed to prisoners are to be received with the utmost scepticism. I read in a pamphlet by Prof. A. Schröer, of Cologne, that English prisoners passing through that city "could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw that our noble Cathedral was not a heap of ruins as their papers had assured them." No such report ever appeared in the English press.[1] There were wild rumours in all countries at the beginning of the war. For instance, you may have heard something of the legend prevalent in Germany in August 1914 that huge quantities of gold were being transported to Russia in mysterious motor-cars. An equally baseless myth of the transit of a Russian army through England took hold of the public mind in this country at a somewhat later period. There is everywhere in war-time a vast spontaneous generation of lies, for which no one seems to be responsible. But the particular lie about the destruction of Cologne Cathedral is a lie that was never told, and cannot possibly have been in the minds of English prisoners. Perhaps the French prisoners' alleged belief in the destruction of Nürnberg may be equally mythical.

Again, you tell us that your blood boils—the blood of an old soldier—at the "malicious fable" of the ill-treatment of German soldiers by their officers. On this I will only say that the evidence as to the brutality of the "Unteroffizier" in particular is for the most

[1] If you doubt this, you may refer to the German publication, "All Lies," in which the alleged falsehoods of the Entente press are collected. Such a gigantic and imbecile falsehood could not have escaped the editor of that collection.

part German evidence. If it is false or exaggerated, I suggest that you should attack it at its source. I will mention only one little incident, related by an American journalist in the autumn of 1914. He was a favoured personage who accompanied the advancing German army in Belgium, and he was full of enthusiasm for the admirable organization by which his movements were furthered. If he was not pro-German in sympathy, at all events he was not markedly anti-German. Without any indignation, without any comment—in the most "objective" manner, as you would probably phrase it—he relates how, at one point, a sentry failed to salute the officer who accompanied him, and how the officer lashed the man across the face with his riding-whip. Perhaps you think this an ordinary and legitimate incident, since "Disziplin muss sein!" I do not say that analogous cases may not occur in other armies. But I do say that if such are the indispensable methods of militarism, it is a degradation to humanity, and cannot too soon be swept off the face of the earth.

Before proceeding to more important matters, may I call your attention to a remark in which I think you cannot but recognize, on sober reflection, that the Prussian monarchist has got the better of the man of sense? You say:

> We find it natural and necessary that our Empress should have all her sons under fire ("im Feuer"). Quite a matter of course! Of Prussian princes, nothing else is thinkable!

And again:

> What a blessing it is for our people that every German wife and mother can say to herself: "It is not I alone that have a husband and sons in the fighting line ('vor dem Feinde'), but the Frau Kaiserin as well."

Your common sense must unquestionably assure you that it is impossible for a father and six sons to take the chances of ordinary officers in this war, and to come out scatheless, save for one slight wound. Such amazing freaks of fortune do not happen. When they seem to happen—to princes—we know how to interpret them. It is as certain as anything can be that the Kaiser and his sons are not subjected to any considerable risk. Why should they be? No one can blame the Great General Staff for not giving the Allies any opportunity of killing or taking prisoner one of the princes of Prussia. It is no slur upon their bravery or their patriotism to believe that a special military providence watches over them. But, this being so, why pretend that the German mother should find comfort in the thought that the Kaiserin's sons are running equal risks with her own? Why solace your soul, and the soul of the German mother, with what one can only call a wilful illusion? An Englishman who should talk in this strain would at once be written down a snob; but I am willing to admit that king-worship in Germany is not mere snobbery, but a political opinion, like another. I do not here criticize that opinion; but I do suggest that the trifling illusion which it in this case leads you to accept and to dwell upon, as an idea particularly comfortable to the heart of the German people, is perhaps typical of many other wilful illusions of infinitely greater moment, which they and you have eagerly adopted, and "grappled to your souls with hooks of steel."

III

We come now to a far more important matter. What has most disappointed the friends and admirers of Germany—and, believe me, she had many friends

and admirers in England, down to August 1914—is the extraordinary lack of chivalry in her attitude of mind, the inability

> To honor, while you strike him down,
> The foe that comes with fearless eyes.

Of this infirmity of temper, you afford, it seems to me, a conspicuous instance in the following well-nigh incredible utterance:

> See what the war has laid bare in others! What have we learnt of the soul of Belgium? Has it not revealed itself as the soul of cowardice and assassination? . . . They have no moral forces within them: therefore they resort to the torch and the dagger.

What words can convey the amazement with which one finds such expressions proceeding from such a source? Consider the situation for one moment! A small country, peaceable, industrious, prosperous, has for three-quarters of a century led a wholly inoffensive life, guaranteed against disturbance by three great neighbouring Powers. Suspicions having arisen that one of these Powers does not intend to keep its word, a question is asked in its Parliament (Reichstag, 29 April 1913) and elicits from the Foreign Secretary an unqualified assurance that the guarantee holds good. Fifteen months later, when the crisis comes, the Belgian Government asks the German Minister in Brussels for a formal declaration of Germany's intentions, and he replies, though not officially, in re-assuring terms. Then, on the evening of the very same day, the same Minister presents an ultimatum, requiring Belgium to abandon the neutrality to which she is reciprocally plighted, or to consider herself at war with the mighty German Empire. Belgium does not hesitate for a moment. If Germany is false to her engagements, she will be true. A country of seven

million people, she places herself, in obedience to the "categorical imperative" of her sense of honour, across the path of an Empire whose army alone outnumbers her whole population, and which is known to be enormously formidable in all appliances and munitions of war. She performs, in short, an act of heroism for which history, and even legend, affords few parallels; and you, sir, whose life-studies ought surely to have taught you to know heroism when you see it, have not only no word of respect for such high-hearted gallantry, but can actually brand it as "cowardice" and lack of "moral force"!

Such a judgement would be absolutely incredible if one had not ample proof on every hand that, in the eyes of the typical German, every act of opposition to the will of Germany is a base and dastardly crime. What is really surprising, then, is to find that, in this respect, Ulrich v. Wilamowitz is only—a typical German.

Perhaps you will say that Belgium had no right to feel surprised at her fate, since Germany had for years been constructing strategic railways on her frontier. But these railways did not actually prove Germany to be meditating perjury. They might, after all, have been designed for defence—to secure Germany against a conceivable violation of Belgian neutrality by other Powers. It was always possible that Germany might be honest and faithful to her word. For that matter, no one maintains that all treaties should be binding for ever. Had Germany denounced the treaty of 1839, and given fair warning that she did not intend to be bound by it, her course would have been truculent but upright. But that was not the course she took. She lied up to the last moment, in order to take Belgium as nearly as possible unprepared. History has doubtless acts of equal baseness to show, but I

think it would be difficult to point to an outrage at once so deliberately planned, so treacherous in method, and so vast in scale.

You will probably say that in accusing the Belgians of cowardice, you were not thinking of the action of the Government, but of the populace. You had in mind the stories of ambush and mutilation put abroad by your countrymen, to excuse the savagery with which they treated the "conquered" country. I have seen nothing that can reasonably be called evidence to justify your insinuation about "the torch and the dagger;"[1] whereas the ruthlessness with which the civil population was terrorized and massacred is proved by mountains of evidence, and is scarcely denied. I grant, however, that the time has not yet come for a dispassionate sifting of the accusations and counter-accusations which now darken the air. What is quite certain is that an innumerable multitude of soldiery was let loose upon the unhappy little country; that they were all unseasoned to the nervous tension and fierce excitement of war; that they were exasperated by unexpected opposition; and that their officers had been deliberately trained[2] to despise "humanitarian notions" and to accept the devilish sophistry that "the only true humanity" often lies in ruthlessness. Given all these elements of mischief, do you think there can be any reasonable doubt that, to put it at the very lowest, the "severities" exercised upon the civil population were far in excess of anything justified by martial law or military necessity?

But, though I cannot see how any reasonable being

[1] The suggestion of the "torch" is particularly audacious. Was it, perhaps, the Belgians who were equipped with the latest devices for incendiarism, and who burnt the Louvain library?

[2] See "Kriegsgebrauch im Landkriege."

can resist this conclusion, it is not the point I desire to urge upon you. To reach that point, I will, for the argument's sake, grant your own premises. I will assume that a few Belgians acted in ways condemned by international law and even by humanity. I will assume that they resorted to "the dagger" ("the torch" is nonsense) and that in some cases they killed the wounded and mutilated the dead. Supposing that this were so, I ask you to say, on your honour and conscience, whether you, as a presumably fallible human being, can have nothing but lofty moral abhorrence for such conduct? Put yourself for a moment in their place. You are living a peaceful, innocent, industrious life in the home of your ancestors, tilling the soil or plying the loom. You have given no human being the slightest ground for offence. You have a great and powerful neighbour who has sworn to protect you in the event of disturbance. Questioned only the other day as to whether his oath holds good, he has declared that he considers himself fully bound by it. Then all of a sudden he rushes at you and says: "Be false to your word as I am false to mine, or behold! I will strangle you and devote your patrimony to devastation and ruin!" You decline the shameful bargain, and he hurls upon you his giant bulk, not merely applying the force necessary to gain his ends, but treating you with a savage vindictiveness, which shows that he regards your very existence as an unpardonable wrong to him. Under these circumstances, can you sincerely maintain that you would be nicely chivalrous in your method of resisting the aggressor? that you would scrupulously refrain from hitting below the belt? or that you would consider yourself utterly contemptible if you did things in the frenzy of resentment which your calmer judgement would disapprove?

I do not pretend, of course, that the Belgian peasants and artisans were fully alive to the juridical aspects of the case, or would have argued it just as I have done. Most of them, no doubt, knew only that an inexplicable and hideous calamity had dropped upon them from the skies. They had injured no one, they had threatened no one. They had cherished no rancour, they had harboured no ambition. Suddenly innumerable hordes of men in grey, armed with every implement of death and destruction, had descended upon their fields and villages, trampling, battering, destroying, killing, and, even in their milder moods, domineering and tyrannizing. Surely, sir, you have sufficient imagination to conceive what you yourself would have done under such circumstances. I, at any rate, respect you too much to admit that your conduct would have been such as to facilitate the designs and promote the convenience of the wanton invaders of your country.

Perhaps you may say that my argument proves too much, and would justify the resort to every possible barbarity against an invading army. This is not so. To say that, in certain circumstances, exasperation is comprehensible and inevitable, is not to justify everything that exasperation may do. My contention is that the evidence upon which the Belgians are accused of breaches of international law is extremely weak, and that even supposing that, in a certain number of cases, it will bear examination, a few lapses into inhumanity cannot, under such circumstances, afford plausible ground for the moral condemnation of a whole people, and ought not even, in common fairness, to be regarded as utterly inexcusable in individuals whom a monstrous wrong may have temporarily dehumanized.

I have said nothing about the complicated and self-contradictory German pleas in extenuation of the in-

vasion of Belgium, for you have the good sense not to allude to them. Of course, you do not believe the excuse originally put forward, that the French were planning an attack on Germany through Belgium. We may take it that that fable has been abandoned. Nor does a man of your sense attach any weight to the belated excuse that Belgium had "forfeited" her neutrality because she had allowed one of its guarantors to consider what steps should be taken to protect it in the event of its being violated by another Power. That such childish subterfuges should have any weight with otherwise reasonable men is a curious proof of the havoc wrought by the war fever upon the German intelligence. I am glad, though of course not surprised, to find you immune from these most pitiable symptoms of the "furor Teutonicus."

IV

We now come to the great misunderstanding—perhaps the most tragic in history—which it is my purpose to examine and define. I mean, of course, the misunderstanding between Germany and England. I cannot hope to dissipate it, even in your mind; but something will be gained if I can bring you to realize that it exists, and that the simple theory that the war is due to England's villainy is a little too simple to tally with the facts.

You are no doubt willing and even eager to admit from the outset that there has been a misunderstanding. "England," you will say, "has grossly misunderstood Germany, the most pacific and high-minded of nations. But we have not misunderstood England. We know her from of old—perfidious, egoistic, grasping England." It is just on this point that I am not without some faint hope of modifying your view. If

we have misunderstood Germany, I submit that it is because there is (or was before the war) no single and consistent Germany to understand. One half of her brain seems to have had a curious faculty of working in bland unconsciousness of what the other half was thinking, feeling, designing. As for your mental picture of England, we know it, with a certainty beyond all argument, to be wildly remote from the truth. I do not say that we gave you no excuse for misunderstanding us. There were foolish people here who did all in their power to embitter relations between the two countries; and you could not be expected to know England well enough to rate these mischief-makers at their true insignificance. But they only stimulated an antecedent tendency in the German mind. The very existence of England came somehow—so you imagined—between Germany and the sun. You did not want to understand her; you wanted only to find reasons for your instinctive dislike. And this is true even of that half of the German brain which was unconscious of actively hostile designs. That is why I say that by far the larger share of responsibility for the great misunderstanding lies at the door of Germany.

Let me briefly summarize your historical sketch of the origin of the war. It differs in no particular from the official, orthodox account of the matter. Quite amazing and admirable is the drill to which German opinion has been subjected. Five hundred orators and pamphleteers move as one man, "in Reih' und Glied," like a battalion on parade. You differ from your colleagues only in being much more dignified and less abusive. It is strange that your worst insult should be reserved, as we have seen, for Belgium.

On France and Russia you do not waste many words. Their populations you admit to be pacific; but

they are led to the slaughter, in the one case, by a corrupt clique of self-seeking politicians, in the other case by a still more corrupt gang of bureaucrats and courtiers. My only comment on this will be to ask you whether the two years that have intervened since you wrote these words have left your view of the situation unaffected. Has the magnificent resistance of France proceeded from an unwilling people, goaded by grasping placemen? Would the superb recuperative power of Russia have been possible if the heart of the nation had not been in the struggle? Does it not rather seem that in both countries, but especially in France, the motive-power may have been a passionate determination to live no longer under the intolerable menace of a militant Prussianism? If the man of science—the large-minded student of human motives and conduct in the antique world—has not been wholly swallowed up by the German tribesman, the story of Verdun must surely have some lessons for you.

But France and Russia were at best, you think, only the puppets of a malign and crafty England. That is the legend upon which the soul of the German people has been sustained through the anguish of the war. It is that which has converted your countrymen's smouldering enmity towards England into a raging fury of hatred, if not unexampled in history, at any rate unique in its self-consciousness and self-righteousness. Never before has a great nation taken pride in foaming at the mouth, or made a virtue of an epilepsy. You, sir, are not quite easy in your mind over this grotesque phenomenon—that one can pretty plainly perceive. But even you make no decided protest against it. On the contrary, while preserving an air of judicial calm, you give a sketch of the relations between England and Germany which is calculated, if not to fan the

flame of hatred, at any rate in no way to assuage it. You lend the weight of your authority to the great misunderstanding.

V

Having dismissed France and Russia as mere victims of internal corruption, you proceed:

And then England! She does not, like France, send all her sons, but enlisted men. There is the real motive power, the evil spirit which has conjured up this war from the deeps of Hell—the spirit of envy and the spirit of hypocrisy.

Then you touch upon a succession of points in English history, interpreting everything to England's disadvantage. I need not tell you—for no one can know it better—that this is a very easy game. There is no human action that is purely angelic. It is possible to assign egoistic motives to the sublimest self-sacrifice; and no one pretends that self-sacrifice is the keynote of the history of England, any more than of any other nation. Your own political philosophers are emphatic in declaring that egoism is and must be the prime motive of the State, as such. German publicists are never tired of telling us what "a healthy egoism" demands that Germany must do. It is only when England is found to have acted with an eye to her own interests that such conduct becomes base and despicable.

England, you tell us, carried on great wars against Spain and France, fighting the battle of Protestantism, protecting the Netherlands, and so forth:

But always there was the clearly-marked undercurrent of a consistent English policy of self-interest, the striving of the island people for the command of the sea.

Well, and then? Do you blame us for being an island people and for acting accordingly? Do you deny the right of a nation to make use of its natural advantages? You will probably admit that no nation enjoys invasion, though you seem to share the opinion of your countrymen that it is criminal for non-Germans to resent the occupation of their country by a nice, kind German army. With the help of a stormy season, we sent the Great Armada to the right-about—an act of pure egoism, for which, however, we decline to hang our heads at the bar of history. Since then, we have shown the same unconquerable objection to allowing the armies of a great continental Empire to land upon our coasts. This was very selfish, no doubt; but have you any record of any other nation in history that would not at all events have desired to do likewise? And should you not consider any island people stark, staring mad that did not make every possible endeavour to keep its shores inviolate?

A more generous, and perhaps not less just, interpretation of history would emphasize the fact that, while safeguarding her own interests, England had often shown what may be called a high European public-spirit in making great efforts and sacrifices to prevent the Continent from falling under the heel of an overweening military despotism. Philip II, Louis XIV, Napoleon—it was, ultimately, on the white cliffs of England that their "Weltmacht" was shattered. You will scarcely deny, sir, that in these great world-crises she did some service to free national development. Nor can I doubt that you are, or were before the war, psychologist enough to know that it is just as unscientific to think her motives wholly base as to believe them entirely disinterested and angelic.

And if, after the lapse of another century, she is for

the fourth time playing her historic part, and setting limits to the ambition of an overweening military despotism, do you think it is quite reasonable to assume, because you happen to be a part of that organization, that England's motives can be summed up in the simple formula of "envy and hypocrisy"?

You do not deny that England did some service against Napoleon.

No doubt (you say) England's resistance was something gigantic and admirable, and against it Napoleon dashed himself to pieces. Without this help, no doubt, Europe could not have compassed his fall.

But you go on to say that "England still preferred to leave the fighting to others," and that Wellington insisted on calling the decisive battle "Waterloo" instead of (as Blücher suggested) "La Belle Alliance." Let us look a little at these two sneers.

It is undeniably true that, until Germany forced that benefaction upon her, England had no system of compulsory service. The right of compulsion was always there in theory, and it was sometimes tyrannously exercised, as, for instance, by the naval press-gangs during the Napoleonic wars. But as England could, as a rule, get all the men she wanted by voluntary enlistment, there would have been no sense in her anticipating the continental theory (which, after all, is little more than a century old) of the "nation in arms." That England maintained a sufficient power, both naval and military, to secure her from any serious invasion, is patent on the very surface of history; and it is not very clear why any country should be despised for not burdening itself with a superfluous military establishment. Would you expect Britain, being, once for all, an island, to act as if she were not? On the continent, England has never, during the past

three centuries, made war for her own hand, but always as one of a coalition whose other members were more directly interested than she in the result. She aided them with contingents of British troops which no one (to my knowledge) ever despised. You yourself admit the great part played by the British army under Marlborough; but afterwards, you say, the English "got others to fight for them." There are names on the colours of many a British regiment that very largely qualify that statement. To go no further back, you may have heard—though you do not mention it—of the Peninsular War, in which men of the Three Kingdoms took no inconspicuous part. Nor were these men entirely absent from Quatre Bras and Waterloo. It is, in short, very ridiculous to insinuate that British blood contributed less than British money to the checkmating of Louis XIV, and the overthrow of Napoleon. And it is worse than ridiculous—it is childish—to call a Briton who fights for his country a "mercenary" and a "hireling," because he enlists of his own free will and receives a very moderate wage for his labours and perils. You, sir, do not lay much stress on this silly reproach; but scores of your colleagues are never tired of reiterating it.

But now I have an admission to make. It is unfortunately true that, in the eighteenth century, Britain did employ foreign mercenaries in some of her wars. In the American War of Independence, for example, the use she made of them was impolitic and unjustifiable. So much one must confess with shame. But what "hirelings" were they? For the most part the soldier-slaves of German princes, ruthlessly sold into foreign bondage. The transactions were not creditable to either party; but on which did the blacker shame

rest? Not, it seems to me, on the British buyer, but on the German seller of his own flesh and blood.

As for Waterloo, I can imagine nothing more petty than the ceaseless efforts of German writers to belittle the British share in that event. It is clear beyond all doubt that Wellington's army had borne the burden and heat of the day; it is equally clear that the arrival of Blücher's army turned a trembling scale, and consummated the destruction of the French host. Who can say what might have happened had Blücher failed to arrive? Napoleon's defeat, no doubt, would not have been so decisive; it is even possible that he might have maintained his ground or forced Wellington to retire. But it is certain that the fighting power of the French army was pretty well broken before the Prussians appeared on the horizon; and it is mere speculative malice to pretend that Wellington was saved from a great disaster. I do not say that English popular writers, and perhaps even serious historians, may not have failed to give sufficient weight to the Prussian intervention at the critical moment; but it is a universal-human foible (from which Germans, assuredly, are not exempt) to be chiefly interested in one's own doings. To call the battle "La Belle Alliance" would have been a mere freak. The French name, "Mont St. Jean," has more to be said for it. But Napoleon himself had written to Grouchy on the morning of the fateful day: "L'armée anglaise a pris position à Waterloo";[1] so he apparently agreed with his opponent as to the description most applicable to the whole scene of the struggle.

Leaving this petty matter, I turn to your account of what happened after the fall of Napoleon:

[1] Henry Houssaye, "Waterloo," p. 316.

In the re-adjustment of European relations (you say) the power of England at once makes itself felt with brutal clearness. Germany must have no coast-line, Germany must have no independent commerce, Germany must not be a maritime nation. Therefore Hanover *becomes a state dependent on England*, therefore Prussia is cheated of East Friesland, therefore Holland and Belgium are formed into a state destined to become, like Hanover, subordinate to England.

Surely a marvellous reading of history! England is accused of maliciously thwarting the ambitions of "Germany" at a time when Germany did not exist as a political entity! Hanover, whose German rulers had been for a century the kings of the British Islands, "*becomes* a state dependent on England"! England is blamed for not handing over the Netherlands, a historic, and gloriously historic, political entity, to the politically non-existent "Germany"! As for blocking Germany's path to the sea, was Germany left with one foot less of seaboard than she possessed when the Hanseatic towns, as German writers are never tired of boasting, dominated the commerce of Europe? You seem to forget, sir, that in 1815 Prussia had not swallowed up Germany, nor was Germany in the least anxious to be devoured. If Prussia, as distinct from Germany, did not come off so well as she hoped in the re-arrangement—not so well as Bismarck afterwards thought she ought to have done—is it reasonable to attribute that fact to any profound and far-seeing British hostility? The Germany established by the Congress of Vienna was a product quite as much of German as of British influences; and to make it a reproach to England that she did not help to realize, by anticipation, the Bismarckian ideals, is to perpetrate an anachronism which shows the detrimental effect of hatred upon even such an intellect as yours.

VI

Of the nineteenth century you say little or nothing, manifestly because hatred itself can suggest no wrong done by England to Germany during that period. In 1864 England looked on passively at the dismemberment of Denmark—a grave and perhaps a dishonourable fault, but one of which Germany, at any rate, has no right to complain. Some of your colleagues try to make out that in 1870-71 England's neutrality was hostile to Germany; but that is far from being the case. Many people, no doubt, felt the sympathy with France which no one can deny to a nation struggling gallantly against overwhelming disaster. But it was generally recognized that the Second Empire had brought its fate upon itself, and had walked with inexcusable blindness into the trap which Bismarck had set for it. And throughout the century the educated public of England took an entirely sympathetic interest in Germany. Down to 1820 or thereabouts, the British stage, then in total literary decline, was dominated by cheap German romanticism. Coleridge, Carlyle, and many others interpreted to their countrymen the higher aspects of German literature and thought. The first part of "Faust" was translated some twenty-five times. Heine found almost adoring readers and innumerable translators. German philosophy was very widely studied; German music met with immediate and generous appreciation. Many English novelists represented Germany in an extremely attractive light. I well remember how my youthful imagination was fascinated by the romantic vision of the sunlit Rhineland conjured up by Thackeray in "The Newcomes." Meredith made sympathetic use of German scenery and character. Immediately after the war of 1870, William Black, a

novelist of some note in his day, chose a German lieutenant for the hero of one of his most popular novels. The evidences of friendly interest in Germany and things German could be multiplied indefinitely. During the later years of the century numberless English and Scottish students attended German universities, and many young English scholars made a habit of spending the greater part of their vacations in Germany. German scholars, I gladly admit, took an equally keen and more systematic interest in England, and I do not think that, as a whole, they had any reason to complain of their reception at Oxford, Cambridge, and the British Museum. This state of things lasted until close upon the end of the century. I do not think that, in the English feeling towards Germany, there existed any such undercurrent of dislike as is clearly traceable in the German feeling towards England. It is patent enough in Heine and Fontane; in Treitschke it is no longer an undercurrent, but a Gulf Stream.

But here I see you ready with a retort. "Ah, yes!" you say, "Until near the end of the century you felt for us a kindly, half-contemptuous tolerance; for you were not yet thoroughly alive to the fact that we were no longer a nation of 'poets and thinkers,' but your most dangerous competitors in the markets of the world. As soon as you began to feel the stress of our rivalry, your mood changed, and you set about plotting our ruin." Or, to put it in your own very words:

> Ours are both the German intelligence and the German industry. German inventiveness, German strength, German diligence, are threatened with destruction. The efficiency of our merchants, whose goods and ships, to the annoyance of the Briton, encounter him on every sea, is to be annihilated.

I will not stop to examine the verbal extravagances

of this utterance, or to enquire whether you really believe that any Englishman is so mad as to imagine it possible to "annihilate" ("vernichten"), or even to paralyse, the inventiveness, industry, etc., of a nation of 70,000,000 people. I will make reasonable allowance for rhetorical exaggeration, and assume you to mean that England desired, by force of arms, in some way to restrict, hamper, diminish, damnify the trade of Germany. I own it conceivable that England might have been so unutterably foolish; but between the conceivable and the actual there may be —and there is in this case—all the difference in the world.

You will doubtless admit that, when a certain course of action has to be accounted for, and many strong, and sane, and irresistible motives for it are obvious to the view, it is unreasonable to ignore them and attribute the action in question to insane and self-defeating malice. That is what you and your countrymen do in maintaining that England made war upon Germany out of commercial envy and rivalry. If Germany was prosperous, so was England—enormously, increasingly prosperous—and Germany was her best customer. If we had wanted to interfere with Germany's trade, there were means to that end immeasurably simpler and safer than war. A powerful political party urged the adoption of these means, but the nation again and again rejected the proposal. We felt that in some ways Germany's competition was not altogether fair; but we knew that, if Germany was outstripping us, the main reason lay in her more modern, energetic, intelligent commercial organization. This we fully realized: our newspapers were never tired of reiterating it, and urging us to "wake up"; and if we were slow in waking up it was because

we were still so prosperous that we did not feel the pinch of necessity. Can you really believe, then, that rather than make the slight exertion necessary to rival the efficiency of German business methods, we recklessly and suicidally determined to incur the gigantic labours and perils of a world-war, in order to throttle our best customer? Remember that in point of territory we had absolutely nothing to gain. We did not covet any of your overseas possessions, which had been acquired with our perfect good will; and even you will scarcely suspect us of any desire to conquer and annex any part of continental Germany. We had, in short, no reasonable economic motive for wanting to crush Germany. Your theory—the orthodox German theory—of our reasons for entering the war, amounts to accusing us of facing the incalculable dangers and horrors of Armageddon rather than take the trouble of teaching our bagmen Spanish.

I know that you have one document to cite in support of your theory. So long ago as 1897, a weekly paper, once noted for reckless brilliancy, but fallen on evil days, and at that time edited by a man who is now foremost among the enemies of England in America, published a mad and wicked article, arguing, or rather asserting, that if Germany ceased to exist, there was not a man in England that would not be the richer, and concluding "Germania delenda est." The fact that such an article should pass unpunished is one proof among many that the freedom of the press is no unmixed blessing. It would have been a fit subject for diplomatic representations; but the German Ambassador of the day no doubt hesitated to confer so much distinction on a freak of irresponsible and unprincipled journalism. The article passed absolutely unnoticed in England. It came upon us as an extremely disagree-

able surprise when, after the outbreak of war, we found it quoted in scores of German books and pamphlets. The fact that it is the one incriminating document produced by every advocate of the German theory proves that it is indeed unique. Since the turn of the century, there has been, for reasons to be presently discussed, much anti-German writing in the British press, and some of it, no doubt, has been as reprehensible as the corresponding utterances in the German press. But this is the one article that has been or can be produced to show that England, from motives of base cupidity, desired the destruction of Germany's trade. No one can possibly deplore the luckless ebullition more than I do; but I suggest that it is insufficient evidence for the belief that the general mind of England, or any appreciable portion of it, was at that date or any other infected by such criminal lunacy.

VII

I have said that when there are strong and sane and obvious motives for a given course of action, it is unreasonable to ignore them and allege others which are inadequate and foolish to the point of insanity. If a man sets to work to undermine my house, with the manifest intention of blowing it up as soon as he finds it convenient, and if I thereupon take steps to restrain his openly hostile activities, can he plausibly appeal to the sympathy of the neighbours on the plea that I am a covetous scoundrel intent upon picking his pockets?

Of course you will deny the justice of the image, and declare that Germany was not undermining England's house, and had no hostile intentions towards her. That you believe this I cannot doubt; but that only proves that when national—or shall I say tribal?—feeling is strongly aroused, belief falls under the

control, not of reason, but of will. Your will to believe Germany spotless is so strong as to blind you to the plainest facts of the case.

Here we are at the very heart of the great misunderstanding.

It would conduce not a little to lucidity if I could persuade you to open your mind to a certain fact which, though not conclusive as to the rights and wrongs of our debate, is as certainly true as that Berlin stands on the Spree. The fact is this: at the outbreak of the war, when we in England realized that you in Germany were surprised at our coming into it, our feeling was not merely surprise, but amazement. "What on earth did they expect?" we said, each to his neighbour. "Have they not been asking for it any time for the past fifteen years? Have they not been openly threatening, not only the existence of the Empire, but the safety of the land we live in? Have they not been forcing upon us a ruinous competition in naval armaments, and scornfully declining every proposal for a slackening in the race? Have they not deliberately created an intolerable condition of latent war? And now, having done all this, do they expect us to break our plighted word to Belgium, and be false to our declared friendship for France and Russia, in order that they may crush all opposition in continental Europe, and be able, at their leisure, to apply the milliards of their booty to their great ultimate object of overpowering Britain and dismembering her Empire? Truly, they must either be mad themselves, or believe that we are mad!" I am not for the moment asking you to accept this as a true account of the situation: I am only assuring you, with all possible earnestness, that it was the view which imposed itself as absolutely self-evident upon all Englishmen, with scarcely an excep-

tion: the view which begot in us, so recently torn by faction, a unity of spirit and resolve not less remarkable than that German unity of which your countrymen are so immeasurably proud. If you will but understand that, rightly or wrongly, this was, as a matter of fact, the view that all England held, I think you will admit that it is unnecessary and unreasonable to look any further for England's motive in going to war. She took up arms in defence, not only of the smaller nations of her Empire, but of her own very seriously endangered national existence.

"In that case," you may perhaps say, "how hypocritical to allege the pretext of Belgium!" Is it hypocrisy to have more than one motive for a given course of action? A motive of honour reinforcing a motive of interest? A practical as well as an ideal motive? I am sure you will not take up any so absurd position. It was Belgium, as a matter of fact, that put the seal on our national unity. Had you left her in peace, there would have been a strong party which, while recognizing the dangers of the situation, would have said: "Let us not plunge into war in order to avert a peril which, after all, is not immediately imminent." Very likely I myself might have been short-sighted enough to adhere to that party. At any rate, I cannot too urgently beg you to believe that nothing but the sense of obligation to Belgium would have reconciled thousands—nay, millions—of my countrymen to Britain's participation in the war. If that motive has now fallen somewhat into the background of the national consciousness, it is because the fuller revelation of the German spirit has satisfied us all that it is a spirit with which we could not possibly have remained at peace.

"But," you may perhaps object, "if you repudiate

the motive of commercial envy, what about your newspapers' jubilation over the 'Capture of German Trade'? What about the measures discussed at the Paris Conference, for a trade war to follow the war of blood and iron?" To this I reply, in the first place, that the endeavour to cut the enemy's trade connections is an obvious and inevitable measure of war, which does not in the least imply that the war was undertaken with that object. In the second place, the economic relations of the Allied countries with Germany after the war will depend largely upon the attitude of the German mind. If your countrymen are clearly bent on employing their wealth in preparation for another onslaught upon the liberties of Europe, there will be some who will urge that, even at a loss to ourselves, we should prevent them from accumulating wealth. If, on the other hand, we have any reasonable assurance of Germany's will to peace—if we can believe that she will be content to live and let live—then Germany's wealth will be our wealth, and we shall have no sound motive for attempting to restrict or impair it.

VIII

My last two paragraphs have been something of a digression from the main line of my argument. Let us now return to the point at which I had sketched for you the frame of mind in which England approached the war, and begged you to believe that the sketch was historically true, quite apart from the question whether, and in what measure, the frame of mind was justified. That is the question we must nowdiscuss. Did England misunderstand Germany? Was her conviction that Germany was aiming at her downfall—was at all events determined so to reduce her margin of safety as to

subject her to practical vassalage—a false and injurious imagination?

You emphatically reply that it was. Your whole argument rests upon the assertion of Germany's wholly unaggressive spirit. You declare several times, in the most explicit terms, that

> Had we had our will there would have been no breach of the peace, for no one in Germany—neither the Kaiser, the army, nor the people—no one coveted a single foot of the territory bordering on our frontiers.

I am sorry to have to point out to you, sir, that this is untrue in the letter, and, even if it be defensible in the letter, it is utterly untrue in the spirit.

That it is untrue in the letter we know on the evidence of a large body of literature, in which the expansion of Germany in Europe was warmly advocated, and even claimed as a right. You knew your colleague, Paul de Lagarde; you delivered a fine oration at his grave; what were his "Deutsche Schriften" but an impassioned plea for a Greater Germany in Europe? You will not deny that Heinrich v. Treitschke was a man of great eminence and influence; he never dissembled his conviction that Germany ought as soon as convenient to possess herself of the mouths of the Rhine. Read the works of Friedrich Lange, of Ernst Hasse, of Albrecht Wirth, of J. L. Reimer, and then tell me that no German desired expansion in Europe! Some of these writers (and many more of the same tendency could be cited) did not quite explicitly say that they demanded conquests by force of arms; but they all demanded economic conquest and unification, and were prepared to impose it by force of arms if necessary. And these ideas were not the whims of isolated individuals. They were disseminated through the medium of large and active societies, who chose for

their spokesmen soldiers and officials of high rank. Read Nippold's "Der deutsche Chauvinismus" and tell me again that no German desired expansion in Europe! If you still maintain that the army was not infected by these ideas, let me refer you to General v. Bernhardi's "Deutschland und der nächste Krieg." Take, for instance, his remark that "France must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path"—you will scarcely pretend that the writer (an ex-member of the Great General Staff) had not in mind any annexation of French territory. There is, in short, overwhelming evidence that large numbers of influential people in Germany eagerly desired territorial expansion in Europe. You will tell me (perhaps with truth) that they did not represent the German nation; but you know very well that the German nation has no share in determining questions of peace and war. At all events, if you will examine the literature of which I have cited only a few specimens, I think you must own that the assertion that "no one coveted a single foot of the territory bordering on our frontiers" is very far from being literally true.

It might, however, have been literally true, and yet utterly untrue in the spirit. Even if it had been the case that Germany coveted no *territory bordering on her frontiers*, it would none the less have been certain that Germany coveted both the actual annexation of some oversea territories, and the establishment of predominant influence in others, and that she well knew these ambitions to be too extensive to be realized without war. This is manifest both in the literature I have already cited, and in other writings so numerous and so notorious that I need not refer to them by name. I will quote only one utterance—not by one of your hot-headed enthusiasts, but by a geographer

and economist of high reputation and authority, Dr. Paul Rohrbach. In "Was will Russland?" (p. 12), Dr. Rohrbach writes:

We could not but say to ourselves, "If once it comes to war with England, it will be difficult for us to get at her in her island. It will be easier to strike at her in Egypt [which the writer elsewhere describes as the keystone of the arch of the British Empire]. But to that end we require an alliance with the Turks." . . . Therefore Germany sent officers to instruct the Turkish army, therefore the Emperor went in 1898 to Constantinople and Jerusalem, and made his famous speech as to the friendship between Germany and the Muhammadans. Therefore we built the Bagdad Railway with German money.

In the face of such an utterance as this, it is surely impossible to pretend that Germany had no ambitions inconsistent with the welfare of her neighbours; and unless that can be established, it is useless (even if it were true) to urge that she desired no extension of her European frontier. Here we find her, by the avowal of one of her leading publicists, deliberately plotting the overthrow of the British Empire by an attack upon its "keystone," and that at a time (1898) when the relations between the two Empires were to all appearance perfectly amicable—six years before the alleged "Einkreisungspolitik" was initiated. And yet you, sir, can actually join in the strident chorus of your countrymen about an "uns aufgezwungener Krieg" conjured up against an innocent and unaggressive Germany by the wiles of envious England!

It is in the following terms that you drive home this accusation:

At last came our little colonies,[1] and came, thanks to our Kaiser, the fleet, this superfluous toy, as an

[1] Only five times larger than the German Empire.

English minister called it.[1] That was too much for the Britons. Now they wanted to make an end. Since the accession of Edward VII, the end has always been clearly in view, the overthrow of Germany, and it has been pursued with a certainty and skill to which we cannot deny our admiration. . . . All attempts to arrive at an understanding with England, which have been made during the past five years,[2] with the approbation, it must be admitted, of the German people, England has only pretended to view with sympathy, in order that Russia might have time to gather up her strength.

May I ask you, sir, at whatever temporary cost to your self-respect, to try to imagine yourself a Briton? You are an inhabitant of an island which (though Professor v. Treitschke denies it natural beauty) has somehow endeared itself to the hearts of its sons and daughters. It has suffered no serious invasion for more than eight centuries. The battles which have taken place on its soil have been, to all intents and purposes, battles of civil war. It does not know by experience what it means to "lie at the proud foot of a conqueror"; but it has only to look at continental Europe, and especially at the history of France and Germany, to conceive a violent and surely not unnatural distaste for such a fate. Moreover, it has certain daughter nations—free communities of its own speech and blood—which look to it for protection against any possible attack from overseas. Can you doubt that you, inhabiting an island so situated, would feel that the first necessity of life—a necessity without

[1] He called it a "luxury," which is not quite the same thing as a "superfluous toy." I thought accuracy of quotation was one of the corner-stones of German philology; but it appears that a Professor can quote as inaccurately as a Chancellor.

[2] Do you really think that these attempts originated in Germany?

which you could not sleep calmly o' nights—was a navy that need not fear to encounter any single rival or any probable combination of rivals? You would know that such a navy was necessary, not only to hold aloof actual invasion, but to prevent the stoppage of those sea-borne supplies without which life in your island could not be maintained for more than a few weeks. You would realize that an insular position, if it has its peculiar advantages, has also its peculiar dangers; and you would hold it the first axiom of politics that the business of Government is to keep these dangers at a distance. Well, supposing you felt thus—and I think you can scarcely deny that you would feel thus—how would it affect you to learn that a neighbouring Power, known to be armed to the teeth and enormously powerful on land, had openly set about the task of making herself enormously powerful at sea, and so imperilling your insular security? Would you not feel it the manifest and imperative duty of your rulers to take measures to meet that threat? And would you think that the mere building of two ships for one (supposing that could go on indefinitely) was a sufficient measure of precaution? Surely not. You would feel that in the face of this colossal and ever-accumulating enmity, all other enmities must be appeased, all threats from other quarters averted. You would regard as a measure of elementary prudence the settling up of outstanding differences with France and Russia, so that at least there should be no coalition of all Europe against your national existence. You would see in this simple reconcilement no plot to "overthrow" Germany, but merely the conversion of possible enemies into assured friends in case of need. And among the motives impelling you and your countrymen to such steps, should you feel

that there was the smallest room for "commercial jealousy" or any such trumpery consideration? No, and a thousand times, no! On that score you would have a perfectly clear conscience. It would seem to you the most ridiculous thing conceivable that you should be accused of wishing to fill your pockets at Germany's expense, when you knew in your inmost heart that your sole and all-sufficient motive was the desire to keep your island home inviolate, and to save from catastrophic disruption a great community of free peoples.

In thus asking you to put yourself in the place of an Englishman and try to realize his feelings and motives, I have merely sought to bring home to you the fact that these feelings and motives were perfectly natural, not to say inevitable, without necessarily implying that they were altogether just. You will, no doubt, say they were founded on mistaken conceptions. Perhaps you will argue that we have here the great misunderstanding. You will tell me that we had no reason to be disturbed by Germany's desire for a powerful navy to protect her growing commerce; that it was not aimed at our national security; and that our feelings on the subject, even if untinged by commercial jealousy, were inspired by an arrogant and overweening superstition of Britain's prescriptive right to absolute supremacy on all the oceans. Let us look into these contentions. I am not without hopes of convincing you that, if there was any misunderstanding on our part, it was an only too natural one, for which we were in nowise to blame.

Consider the historic juncture at which Germany's naval ambitions and schemes were first revealed to us! Four years earlier the Kaiser had gone out of his way to publish his sympathy with a State (the Transvaal)

with which we were at odds. Technically, no doubt, he was in the right, since an unauthorized act of folly had placed us technically in the wrong; but the Kruger telegram was none the less a gratuitous demonstration of unfriendliness. Two years after that, he had proclaimed himself, without any obvious need or invitation, the protector of the Moslem world. We were inclined to regard it as a piece of characteristic rodomontade; we did not see in it the calculated hostility which Rohrbach now admits and glories in; but we could not possibly mistake it for a friendly act. In the next place, it was certain that illusory hopes of aid from Germany had stiffened the resistance of the Transvaal Government to what we regarded (rightly or wrongly) as our reasonable demands, and had helped to involve us in a war which even those of us who thought it necessary hated and deplored. Further, that war had begotten in Germany (this you will surely not deny) a feeling of intense and ungovernable hostility towards us. This, then, was the moment which Germany chose to announce her determination to build, with great celerity, a mighty fleet! Can it possibly surprise you that we should regard this determination with uneasiness, and see in it a distinct menace to our security? We had, of course, a long start, and could hope, by incurring a very heavy burden of taxation, to maintain our lead for a certain time; but it was manifest that this could not go on for ever, and that Germany, if she put her heart into it, would one day be able at least to reduce our margin of safety to the narrowest limit. And Germany did put her heart into it. What had been at first the aspiration of a few leading men, was sedulously worked up until it became the darling ambition of the whole people. Naval programmes grew and grew; all attempts on our part to secure a

little slackening in this cut-throat rivalry were more or less scornfully rejected. Do you really think it possible, sir, that we should have sat quietly down, facing unheard-of burdens of taxation in order to meet Germany's menace, and taking no other measures to make our position a little more secure?

And here let me appeal to your candour: can you lay your hand on your heart and assure me on your honour and conscience that the growing German navy was *not* regarded with enthusiasm, by at any rate a very great number of the German people, simply as a weapon for the eventual humiliation of the hated England? I do not see how you can possibly deny that fact. You may allege excuses, not without reason; but surely you cannot close your eyes to the fact itself. You may tell me that Germany was conscious of a corresponding dislike on the part of the English public, and that several English newspapers did their best to work up ill-feeling. All this is true. Ever since the Boer War—nay, since the Kruger telegram—there had been a growing estrangement between the two countries, in regard to which neither was entirely blameless.[1] I will even admit—for I do not pretend that the English character is (like the German!) wholly angelic—I will admit that the sense of keen commercial rivalry did not tend to make

[1] The general British hostility to Germany is, however, enormously exaggerated by German writers. You yourself say, "I observed the feeling in London when our airship descended at Lunéville; they could not do enough to express their jubilation over the German Sedan, as the provocative papers expressed it." It is, of course, impossible to say that no paper made use of this unspeakably silly expression; but I have looked up the file of the leading "Hetzblatt," and I find, not only nothing about Sedan, but no sort of "jubilation." Not a word is said at which any reasonable German could possibly take offence.

Germany any more beloved in England. All this, I repeat, is true. I do not think that the English feeling towards Germany had anything like the bitterness of the German feeling towards England; but it is difficult to bring such comparisons to the proof. What I emphatically assert, and what I challenge you to deny, is that the first move of active menace came from the side of Germany; that England at no time took any move that was not purely defensive; and that no one in England ever desired or contemplated aggression upon Germany, whereas in Germany the military class, many of the most influential politicians and publicists, and at any rate a considerable section of the general public, desired nothing in this world so much as the humiliation of England, and the dismemberment of an Empire which was somehow felt to have stolen a march on Germany, and mischievously thwarted her just ambitions.

Need I pause to consider the official explanation and vindication of Germany's naval ambitions? We are told by many authorities (notably by Rohrbach) that Germany never intended or hoped to build a fleet that should really threaten the safety of England. All she desired was to possess such a fleet as should force the strongest naval power to think twice about attacking her at sea; and it is argued that this assurance ought to have placed us quite at our ease. Was there ever such a childish contention? Who is to fix the proportion of power at which a fleet becomes, so to speak, passively but not actively formidable—too strong to be attacked, but not strong enough to attack? And supposing this point to be defined and reached, is it not manifest that there could be no guarantee for the maintenance of the equilibrium, if so it can be called? Moreover, Germany and England

did not stand alone in the world. France and Russia, Italy and Austria (the two latter Germany's allies), were considerable naval powers. What was to hinder Germany, when she had reached the point of being "passively" formidable, from making herself "actively" formidable by engineering a naval coalition against England, and sweeping the British navy from the seas? I think you must grant, sir, that Britain could not be expected to pay much heed to the suggestion that the German navy was intended for purely defensive purposes. Any assurance to this effect would have been a very inadequate security even in the case of an entirely friendly Power. In the case of a Power which we knew to be extremely unfriendly, and to be consumed with envy of our world-wide "possessions" (which might much more rightly be called our world-wide responsibilities)—in the case of such a Power it would have been madness to suppose that the huge naval outlay it was incurring was designed for defence alone. England determined to make sure that at any rate France, Russia, and Japan should not take part in a possible coalition against her—and that simple and obvious measure of self-protection is the whole sum and substance of the "encirclement-policy" of which Germany makes so loud a complaint.

I know that after she had provided herself with a very powerful fleet, Germany expressed herself as not unwilling to consider a certain slackening in her ship-building activities, on condition that England should allow her a perfectly free hand in Europe. But what would this have meant? Putting aside all questions of international friendship and honour, it would have meant that Germany could, at her leisure, crush the Dual Alliance, exact gigantic indemnities, and pro-

ceed to build, at the expense of France and Russia, a navy with which England could not hope to contend. Can you seriously suggest, sir, that England ought to have betrayed and abandoned her friends in order to place her neck, without hope of redemption, under the German yoke? Let me assure you that, much as we deplore the hatred with which you regard us to-day, we infinitely prefer it to the contempt which you would rightly have bestowed on us had we accepted so base and suicidal a bargain.

IX

That Germany misunderstood England is perfectly clear, since I suppose you will admit that the general feeling, when it was known that England proposed to stand faithful to her promise to Belgium and her friendship for France, was one of profound astonishment. I have no doubt you are sincere in thinking that England, on her side, misunderstood Germany; but I have tried to show that you yourself have *misunderstood or ignored a large part of the mind of Germany*, and unfortunately that part which controls her political and military action.

Of this I cannot hope to have convinced you. To state the case in full would demand a large volume and the citation of a long array of authorities; and even to that you would probably reply that the authorities did not truly represent the German mind. My purpose will have been served if I have awakened in you even a glimmering perception that your diagnosis of England's motives as "hypocrisy and envy" is ludicrously wrong, and have led you to wonder whether her action, even if you still think it misguided, was not worthy of the respect which no upright man refuses to upright and honourable conduct in another. Your

vision of England sedulously, patiently, and craftily plotting the destruction of Germany is the delusion of a heated fancy. What England did was to take perfectly open and above-board measures of self-protection against the equally open and undisguised hostility of Germany. That there were misunderstandings on both sides is likely enough; but what is clear to the exclusion of all misunderstanding is that *Germany's conception of her rights and interests at sea was inconsistent with England's safety*. You may argue, if you will, that England could not reasonably claim a safety that conflicted with Germany's interests, and that Germany was justified in impugning it. That is the principle on which your annexationists proceed—the principle of State brigandage, defined by Wordsworth as—

> The good old rule . . . the simple plan
> That he should take who has the power,
> And he should keep who can.

But you would have us think that you are not an annexationist—and even if you were, you would surely allow that the right of any one nation to attack another, implies the right of the other to protect itself. As all England has done is to exercise that right, one does not see why your natural hostility towards her should not be tempered with respect.

I have addressed you throughout, and quite sincerely, as a man to be respected. I think you are strangely blinded by the tribal passion which has mastered the German mind to a degree scarcely paralleled in history; but I believe that the catchwords of the hour must one day lose some of their influence over you, and that you may be willing to recognize that it is extremely undesirable for any two nations, who are once for all fated to exist together on a none too extensive planet, to cherish nothing but con-

temptuous incomprehension for each other. I hope, for instance, that you may one day be induced to study the diplomatic correspondence which preceded the war, and to realize that it makes one catchword, at any rate — the catchword of the "aufgezwungene Krieg"—a piece of rather brazen effrontery. It will make, I think, for what may be called mundane sanity if you and the more rational among your countrymen can be brought to realize that Germany is something less than a suffering Christ, and England something other than a covetous and ruffianly Judas.

Yet I would not have you misconceive my purpose. I am not pleading for friendship or holding out a hand towards reconciliation. Before that can come we must have evidence of a change of heart in the German people, going far beyond any mere admission that their adversaries are not entirely contemptible. There can be no joining of hands with Germany until she has washed her hands of the pernicious theories of statecraft and military policy which have made her conduct of this war one long succession of crimes, from the initial crime against Belgium onwards. I do not, of course, expect you to admit any sort of justice in this accusation. The question must be tried out at the bar of history, if not (as one cannot but hope) before some international tribunal that will be somewhat more prompt in its verdict. "What a Utopian idea!" you may say. But why should Germany decline to submit her case to judgement, along with the counter-accusations which she brings against the Allies?[1] I do not

[1] One of these, in particular, you make your own. You say, "Highly-placed persons in England are not ashamed to deny the existence of the Dum-Dum bullets which we find in the English cartridge-cases." You must surely be aware that in all recent wars both sides have been accused of using soft-nosed bullets—

say that there is nothing at all in these accusations, but I do say that there is an enormous excess of savagery (often taking the form of deliberate crime) to be placed to the charge of Germany. In denying it, indeed, she is disloyal to the teachings of her military philosophers (to say nothing of your old schoolmate, Nietzsche), who had been careful to justify it in advance.

Until these memories of blood and horror have died away, or have been cancelled by a confession of tragic error and wrong-doing, there can be no approach to friendship between our countries. But as estrangement to all eternity is a mad and impossible idea, it seemed worth while to attempt to clear the ground for some approach to mutual understanding, by urging upon a man of personal honour the fact—the amazing fact, you will doubtless say—that men of personal honour in England, so far from being ashamed of their country's participation in the war, would have held her eternally dishonoured had she acted otherwise than as she did. Blind hatred and scorn for

the Germans certainly not excepted. Have you inquired at all into the evidence for the finding of Dum-Dum bullets in British cartridge-cases? And supposing a few *were* found, should you not think it reasonable to assume that some old cartridges had been served out by mistake, rather than attribute to the British Government the incredible folly of deliberately supplying a few companies, or even a few battalions, with illegal ammunition? For my part, my common sense rejects the accusation on both sides. No Government is accused of making large and habitual use of soft-nosed bullets; and it would clearly not be worth the while of any Government to lay itself open to the reproach of breaking a convention, unless some considerable advantage were to be gained by it. If you accuse a millionaire of stealing a million pounds, I will examine your evidence carefully; but if you accuse him of filching a five-pound note, under circumstances certain to lead to detection, I take no interest in the evidence, for I am sure there has been some mistake.

adversaries can lead nowhither. Only by understanding our opponents can we understand ourselves; and believe me, sir, it will be to the ultimate advantage of Germany if she will open her mind to the idea that the motives which dragged England, sorely against her will, into this war, cannot reasonably be dismissed in a formula of contempt. Your countrymen's miraculous insight into the minds of other peoples is one of their favourite topics of self-laudation. "We understand all foreign nations," says Professor Werner Sombart; "none of them understands or can understand us." It is true that there are many elements in the German character which non-Germans find it hard to understand; but as for the other half of the proposition, the war has surely demonstrated its falsity beyond all possibility of doubt. If, in July 1914, Germany had understood England—to say nothing of France and Russia—she would never have thrown down the gage of battle as she did. Let her take heed lest, through arrogant incomprehension, she continue to block the way to a saner and a happier world.

Yours, etc.,

WILLIAM ARCHER.

London,
December 8, 1916

Printed in Great Britain by the Chiswick Press, Tooks Court, Chancery Lane, London.

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

JUN 11 1953
APR 1 9 1953
JUN 5 1963
OCT 5 1963
MAY 25 1964
MAY 3 1964
LD-URL APR 5 1965
REC'D LD-URL
FEB 25 '71
FEB 18 1971
REC'D LD-URL
JUL 07 1964
REC'D MLD
RECEIVED
MAIN LOAN DESK
APR 4 1965
A.M. P.M.
7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4 5 6
LD-URL NOV 10 1966
DISCHARGE-URL
JUN 29 1981
MAY 12 1981
Form L-9
25m-2/'43(52)

The Belgian Deportations.
By ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE.
With a statement by VISCOUNT BRYCE.
Demy 8vo. 96 pp. Price Sixpence.

The German Note and the Reply of the Allies.
Demy 8vo. 12 pp. Price One Penny.

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
1, ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

3 1158 00684 0812

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

AA 000 749 999 9